

## Characters

- EURIDICE
- ORPHEUS
- DOC
- NURSE
- NURSE2
- GREEN MOVING FIGURE

## Act

### THE UNDERWORLD

1

*Fifteen years later.*

*EURYDICE sits alone on a red bed. She has flaming hair, so flaming that you can't see anything else of her, much less anything else around her.*

*She takes up too much space. Also she's mad. Which has nothing to do with anything. She lives in her own world because she makes the whole world hers.*

*This apartment and this girl can be found in Algiers:*

*Perching high up, the room overlooks the world. Huge windows surround the head of its bed. Through the glass, there are hills covered by houses and trees. Until there are only trees rising upon trees. Until there is a crown around the sky. Earth and air contain the same light: light coming out from them rather than to them. But if the light came from without, the cliché "everything bathed in light" would be true.*

*A number of stuffed animals sit on the red bed.*

*EURYDICE (or YOU) wears a blue-and-green striped shirt.*

EURYDICE

*( sinking back into the pillows)*

: Oh.

*Her hand on her head like Camille, sinks back even further. There,*

*rolls onto her left side and encounters a wolf. Puts her arms around him, as she's accustomed to do because he's faithful to her and because she knows he won't leave her whatever she does or whatever has happened to her.*

EURYDICE

*( sinking farther back into the pillows):*

Or! Wuffy bit me!

*ORPHEUS (or OR) walks out of the kitchen entrance (on the right) and looks at this girl as if he's looking at a picture. A big man, more a grumbly shambles. Otherwise this one's the spitting image of Hades.*

ORPHEUS

*( as usual trying to understand):*

Wuffy?

EURYDICE

"Wuffy" cause "wolf."

*Oblivious to what YOU's saying, he bends over the bed in order to kiss her. At the same time, YOU sits upright without moving from the spot*

EURYDICE

I'm going to be sick.

ORPHEUS

*( more of a shambles than he has been):*

Is there something I should do?

EURYDICE

*( shaking her head, keeps her mouth closed. The animals are now still.)*

Yes! I'm going to vomit!

ORPHEUS

*( as flustered as if he had just become female and seen a rat):*

What should I do?

EURYDICE

*( waving her hands around like a cockatiel on psychedelics):*

Bring me a plastic bag.

ORPHEUS

*( back down into the hole from whence he came):*

Where are they?

EURYDICE

I don't know.

*( Wants to scratch her head; swallows instead. She hates, more than anything else, the smell of vomit. Doesn't smell like her own cunt.)*

ORPHEUS

*(from the kitchen, you can smell his franticness):*

I don't know where to look.

YOU points her index finger at her mouth in an effort to say something. The animals stop every possible activity.

EURYDICE

*( opening her mouth for the first time in a while):*

Ah . . . !

*( Drool appears. She wipes it away because she's neat. Looks toward the kitchen exit)*

Under the black table top. On that shelf. There should be something.

ORPHEUS

I don't know exactly what you want.

EURYDICE

*( realizing that the time has come):*

Bring anything.

ORPHEUS

Anything? What should I bring?

YOU is vomiting.

ORPHEUS

Oh, I found something.

*He brings a brown paper bag out of the kitchen. One whose bottom corner, for some reason, has been snipped off. YOU grabs and finishes upchucking into it. As she's doing this, it disintegrates. The bed is wet.*

Puddles in a wet forest.

YOU *( looking sadly at a pool of brown paper and strange substances)*: I have to clean this up.

ORPHEUS

How are you?

EURYDICE

Please help me clean up.

ORPHEUS

Are you hurting?

EURYDICE

I'm better now that I've vomited.

ORPHEUS

Maybe you should lie down.

EURYDICE

Please, a sponge. I can't live forever in a mess.

*OR goes back into the kitchen. Clanging of metals and wood and plastics encountering each other. Returns from there with a green thing that's been dead for years. YOU grabs and begins dabbing at the liquid.*

EURYDICE

Water!

( *Pauses* )

Fill the large bowl with water. There's only one large bowl.

*Again, OR disappears down below. Returns with a gigantic clear glass bowl, places it where YOU shows him to. The animals watch them.*

EURYDICE

I can't move my left arm.

ORPHEUS

You only had the operation five hours ago.

EURYDICE

That's true.

( *Puts the even deader green thing in the bowl and hands the object to OR.* )

ORPHEUS

Do you want to eat?

EURYDICE

( *speculatively* ):

I think I remember what it's like to be hungry.

*( Unconsciously trying to unbutton her green-and-blue shirt with one hand. Then realizing that she's doing this and that she won't be able to do this)*

I don't know how I'm going to be able to do things by myself.

*( Looks up)*

You're going to have to help me get this shirt off.

ORPHEUS

*(crawling onto the bed, for that's the only way to get on this bed, and kissing the girl's forehead):*

Let me do it.

EURYDICE

Now help me take it off.

*( OR pulls the shirt, as soon as it's unbuttoned, down then off her right arm, even more carefully down then off her left. Clean white bandages curve around the torso from below the armpits to the bottom of the rib cage.)*

EURYDICE

*( looking down at herself):*

It doesn't look so bad.

ORPHEUS

The doctor said you can start exercising again tomorrow.

EURYDICE

He's a man. What does he know? I'm going to start working out again in a week. That's my schedule. I can't even take a bath until he takes the bandages off.

ORPHEUS

That's only two days from now.

EURYDICE

*( her voice radically changing):*

Yeah.

*( Pauses)*

You know, I'm acting like it's all over and really, this was just a test. It might all be beginning.

ORPHEUS

It's over. In two days the doctor's going to tell you you're fine and we're going to be happy for the rest of our

lives.

EURYDICE

( *putting her right arm around OR's neck*):

We love each other very much. That's the main thing. We found each other when both of us had given up:  
from here on in it's life.

ORPHEUS

The death part is over.

EURYDICE

It has to be that way.

( *Jumps back from OR's exploring hands*)

Don't touch my chest!

( *Embarrassed by her reaction*)

I'm just delicate there. I'll be able to be touched in a day or two.

ORPHEUS

I'll have to remember to be more careful. When do you think we can fuck?

EURYDICE

( *giggling*):

We could try now.

*But as OR lifts himself over EURYDICE's body, she sinks into sleep. Among all the stuffed animals who, now like her, live in another world. ORPHEUS raises his body and leaves the bed.*

*Nighttime. OR, alone, sings.*

Who will sing in the days to come  
Of the death throes of their liberty?  
Sleep, my love, sleep.  
While I sing, all your animals lie at your feet.

What poet, in whose breast hope springs eternal,  
Will see the promised port after drifting through starwrecked seas?  
Sleep, my love, sleep.  
For you have been through hell.

3

*Two days later. A cell in a doctor's office. Barely large enough for ORPHEUS and EURYDICE's bodies. Her back is to us. She's looking, through a small paned window, at a naked man dancing on a rooftop. To her left,*

*there's an examining table; to her right, a sink and a chair the same color as the walls. It doesn't matter what color.*

*She's naked. ORPHEUS isn't. He's looking down. His side is to us.*

EURYDICE

I wish I wasn't there.

*( She stiffens because she's heard something.)*

ORPHEUS

*( wanting to put his arm around her):*

I have the champagne back home. Ready to celebrate.

EURYDICE

That has to be the case. Nothing else is possible. Not bearable.

*Again she hears something.*

*She turns around before the doctor enters the room because she knows that he's going to enter. Looks at his face before he's had a chance to realize he's in this room and has to compose his face.*

EURYDICE

*( to ine doctor):*

It's bad, isn't it?

DOC

It's not good.

*He composes his face. Now it's stunningly obvious that he looks like a movie star. He dresses conservatively. Since this conservatism doesn't hide, but rather enhances his good looks, he seems to be perverse.*

*As this scene continues, he becomes more charming.*

EURYDICE

So tell me the worst.

OR doesn't move.

DOC

We took out the rest of the breast tissue and there was no cancer in any of it.

EURYDICE

That's not bad.

DOC

But.

( *Pauses* )

I have to tell you that we took out eight lymph nodes. Six of them showed signs of cancer.

*EURYDICE sinks down to the ground, the office floor. Into a child's pose. OR does the same so that he can put his arm around her. The arm never gets around her.*

DOC

I must explain the situation to you. This is not a death sentence. You won't be able to comprehend everything I'm saying to you at this time, but let me explain . . .

( *He takes one of EURYDICE's hands and pats it in a fatherly way.* )

EURYDICE

You said that there was very little chance that the cancer had spread to the lymph.

DOC

That was before the operation. Now things are different. I will explain so that you can understand. Some of us are going to die in twenty years, some in five . . .

EURYDICE

( *interrupting him* ):

Are you telling me I'm about to die? I was healthy as hell until you, or your gynecological colleague, felt that lump.

The DOC stops patting her hand and just holds it.

DOC

No, I'm not telling you that you're going to die. I want you to understand the situation. There's a good chance you'll walk out of here and never have anything to do with cancer again.

EURYDICE

What sort of chance?

DOC

According to statistics, at your stage of cancer there's a sixty per cent chance of non-recurrence. If you do chemotherapy, . . .

( *at the sound of this word, YOU scrunches herself up into more than a child* )

. . . your chances go up to seventy per cent.



ORPHEUS

Chemotherapy raises her chances only ten per cent?

The DOC nods his head sadly.

DOC

But we don't know anything else.

EURYDICE

Tell me about cancer and lymph nodes. If my cancer's so advanced, how come there wasn't any other cancer in the breast tissue? Aren't the lymph nodes the body's filter? Couldn't it be possible that the lymph nodes are registering cancer because they're doing what they're supposed to doing, cleaning out the system? I've been on a super-high antioxidant diet for over a month now, ever since I found out I had cancer.

DOC

( *shaking his head even more sadly*):

We don't know what causes cancer. Unfortunately studies have demonstrated that there's no connection between either diet or environmental pollution and cancer.

EURYDICE

( *stands up. She is still shaking*):

Can I use your phone?

( *Runs out*)

DOC

Not many men would do this.

ORPHEUS

( *raises his head*):

Do what?

DOC

Remain with a woman in her condition. I admire you.

ORPHEUS

( *looking at the doctor, strangely*):

I love her.

4

Night The same bed as in the beginning of the play only now its covers are partly pulled down. Making a

house. OR and EURYDICE are inside this house within a house.

Above the bed, the windows are wide open. Though air is blowing through the holes, there is nothing that can be seen.

The stuffed animals are all over the place. OR and YOU, naked.

EURYDICE

( *her right arm around OR's neck*):

I won't have this situation I won't I won't I don't care what they say I'm not ready to die I'm not going to.

ORPHEUS

( *seriously*):

You're not going to die.

EURYDICE

(putting her arm more seriously around OR's neck):

Teil me again.

ORPHEUS

Let's fuck.

EURYDICE

( *trying to understand the word*):

Fuck.

ORPHEUS

We haven't fucked for days.

EURYDICE

We fucked the day after I got home from the hospital. That was two days ago.

ORPHEUS

Touch me.

YOU moves her right hand farther down under the covers until she comes in contact with a leg. Then she brings the hand on that arm up to the surface, spits into it, and goes back down under.

EURYDICE

How's that feel?

OR throws off the bedcovers so he can watch hand.

EURYDICE

You like this, don't you?

ORPHEUS

Move your stomach muscles a little.

EURYDICE

*( does what he says):*

Do you want to fuck?

OR hears this and climbs on top of her.

EURYDICE

*( though OR is inside her):*

Wait.

*( Caught between his body and the bed, she tries to roll on her left side, reaches toward a pillow and manages to catch hold of it. Placing it between OR's chest and hers)*

I'm still sore.

OR moves into her deeply.

EURYDICE

You're always hard, aren't you?

ORPHEUS

*( not succeeding in traveling over to words):*

Not always.

EURYDICE

*( between laughter and fear):*

I've never seen you any other way.

ORPHEUS

*( now finding where words are):*

I've never been turned on by anyone else the way I am by you.

EURYDICE

Despite how I now am?

OR is beginning to move in and out of her slowly.

EURYDICE

I'm not going to die, am I?

ORPHEUS

*( while moving in her with tenderness):*

Of course you're not going to die.

*YOU calms down and begins to realize that she's being fucked. She's aware that she's turned on. As soon as she sees this, she becomes so open to all that's going on that she comes.*

EURYDICE

Oh God yes yes just do it more like that you're almost. Yes yes you've got it you can't stop I'm. Do it again now bring me over again I need it yes.

*As she moans something like this poem, OR stops moving.*

*Realizing that she isn't going to be allowed to go through another round, EURYDICE starts blabbing even though he's deep inside her.*

EURYDICE

I phoned Frank today.

ORPHEUS

*( his mind on something else):*

Frank?

EURYDICE

*(fed up with OR's lack of understanding):*

My psychic.

ORPHEUS

'Bout what?

EURYDICE

'Bout what's going on with me.

ORPHEUS

Did he say something?

EURYDICE

He said I'm not going to die.

ORPHEUS

Isn't Frank the one who told you you didn't have cancer before the operation?

EURYDICE

*( her words running themselves into each other):*

Yes I want to fuck again.

*They do as she says and she comes a bit. ORPHEUS is still in her and hard and hasn't come.*

EURYDICE

What Frank said was that I would need surgery. I would definitely need surgery. And that would be all. He didn't say anything one way or the other about cancer. I think. I think I'm remembering correctly. He definitely said I was going to be, suddenly, lifted right out of my life and then, just as suddenly, dropped back into it more deeply than before.

ORPHEUS

I told you you're not going to die.

EURYDICE

How d'you know?

ORPHEUS

There's no way you're going to die. Climb on top of me.

EURYDICE

*( doing as she's been told to do):*

You always want me on top of you.

*( as soon as she's on top of him)*

You'll have to hold my buttocks down if you want me to get any pleasure this way.

ORPHEUS

*( sort of holding her buttocks down):*

I'm going to come soon.

EURYDICE

If we keep on fucking, I'm not gonna die.

Eurydice's monologue:

EURYDICE

About five weeks ago, on March 30, a biopsy revealed that a mass less than five cm. in my left breast was cancerous . . .

ORPHEUS

Every angel is terrifying. Through the darkness, they move silently . . .

I will go down into death with you.  
I must go where I must go  
To see what I must see  
In that place where no one knows . . .

... This is where love is taking me.

You have been leading  
Me, angels, in and out of death.  
I have no idea who you are.  
Eurydice. Is she nothing  
Or is she your mirror?  
I don't know anymore.  
I am at war.  
Perhaps that which is given —  
Being human—  
Is too hard,  
And so it is love that brings us, To what cannot be born,  
To ourselves,  
And so we must change, Must descend, guided by love, into the unknown.

Lovers disappear in each other.  
Do they disappear forever?  
Where do they go?

6

the first station

*The morning prior to the opening scene of the play.*

*A well-to-do hospital's hallway. Wood walls and a grandiose wood elevator. All highly polished. EURYDICE is in a wheelchair, deposited by the elevator. Feeling in good health, she hates the wheelchair. As this scene progresses, she tries more and more to hide under the baby blue wheelchair blanket.*

*OR stands behind the wheelchair and looks downward.*

EURYDICE

Such a rich hospital. You'd think they could deposit me somewhere else besides at an elevator stop.

ORPHEUS

It's warm here.

EURYDICE

The worst is this waiting.

*OR looks down at her fondly and kisses her forehead as a NURSE comes up. A black woman, who, despite being a nurse, is stylish.*

NURSE

Time to go.

EURYDICE

Where are we going?

*The NURSE opens two gigantic doors to the right of the elevator and pushes the wheelchair through.*

ORPHEUS

Can I come too?

7

the second station

*The morning prior to the opening scene of the play.*

*A far wider hallway devoid of warmth. Of anything that makes life human. Everything, the color of lizards.*

*The wheelchair is sitting in front of twin doors similar in size to, but not the same as, the ones it just passed through. Moving figures in pale, that is, puke-green, who may or may not be human, glide by YOU and OR and ignore them.*

*Above, glaring lights dominate reality.*

EURYDICE

*( so cold that she snuggles under the blanket into the depths of the wheelchair and begins to accept the chair):*

I don't want to be here.

*OR's eyes are very wide open because he's looking.*

EURYDICE

*( ducking farther under the blanket):*

I hope this doesn't take too long.

*Another NURSE comes up to the wheelchair. All the nurses and doctors now seem to be the same cause they're all in pale or puke-green. YOU is on an IV which she hasn't noticed before simply because she hates it*

*worse than the wheelchair.*

NURSE 2

We just have to . . .

*( Not too carefully, she winds scotch tape around YOU's earrings and the skin to which they're attached, around the motorcycle bracelet on YOU's wrist and adjacent skin, over the piercing in YOU's bellybutton.)*

We don't want anything that an electrical wire could touch. Is there anywhere else?

*YOU sticks out her tongue. It's pierced. The NURSE tries to tape up the tongue and fails. She scurries away.*

*The same or another NURSE approaches. She puts a green plastic shower cap, similar to the one all the ambiguous humans wear, over YOU's head. It's so large, it covers almost all of YOU's face. No longer able to see, she looks up at OR, who's looking down at her, as best she can.*

NURSE

Stick out your tongue.

*The thing under the cap sticks out its tongue.*

NURSE

I don't know what to do. You could get electrocuted.

*YOU huddles farther down under her blanket. OR looks down at the ground.*

*A third NURSE approaches the wheelchair. She's friendly.*

NURSE

*( to OR):*

Hi! My name is Andy! I'm here to give her a little shot to make the operation go more easily.

*YOU tries to look up at her with disdain, but the green cap is over her eyes. The NURSE checks the IV needle that's in YOU's right wrist. OR watches with interest.*

EURYDICE

*( who can talk):*

Is it going to hurt?

NURSE

*( gaily):*

That's why you have this IV in you. Makes all of this easy.

ORPHEUS

What are you doing?



NURSE

This is pre-op medication to make the anesthesia take more easily.

( *To YOU* )

It'll feel a little cold.

*YOU tries to escape reality by being dead. She turns her head to one side, lays it on her shoulder, as far as she can, closes her eyes and as many of her other senses as she can. But she can still hear. After a minute, she's bored.*

EURYDICE

It's cold in the back of my neck.

*The NURSE moves away.*

*ORPHEUS and EURYDICE are alone in a cold hall of scurrying green figures of which EURYDICE is one.*

ORPHEUS

It's the pre-med they gave you.

EURYDICE

It's creeping around the base of my skull and eating at me. My brains are nauseous.

ORPHEUS

It'll go away soon.

EURYDICE

But I don't want to be here.

ORPHEUS

( *laughing* ):

Neither do I.

EURYDICE

( *unsuccessfully trying to lift her head* ):

I'm going to leave.

ORPHEUS

Where you going to go?

EURYDICE

I don't know.

( *She gives up and tries to return to being dead.* )

I guess I have to go through with this, but it's really horrible.

ORPHEUS

This is the worst. We'll be home soon and tomorrow we'll be opening the champagne.

*a pale or puke-green figure approaches.*

NURSE

( *to OR* ):

You have to go away now.

ORPHEUS

I don't want to go.

*ORPHEUS keeps looking at EURYDICE as the NURSE wheels her, now totally obscured, through the second twin doors and into . . .*

8

the third station (death)

*The morning prior to the opening scene of the play.*

*A room designed to suck up human life.*

*At the same time, splashes of pale green can be seen and cords hanging from the walls.*

*In the center is something that's part table and part bed. A number of machines that look like Dr. Seuss animals are connected to this object. All of the machines possess a great number of cords or arms.*

*Three or four of the green moving figures are here.*

GREEN MOVING FIGURE

( *to EURYDICE as she's being rolled in* )

: Take off your top gown and climb onto the table.

*YOU does as she's told.*

*A GREEN MOVING FIGURE places thick straps around YOU's arms and legs, then fastens the buckles on the ends of the straps.*

EURYDICE

Why are you doing this?

GREEN MOVING FIGURE

We don't want you to hurt yourself during the operation.

YOU tries to understand.

*A GREEN MOVING FIGURE places the suction pads at the end of electrical cables on her body.*

EURYDICE

What are these?

GREEN MOVING FIGURE

Electrical cables.

*YOU tries to understand.*

GREEN MOVING FIGURE

*( bending its head down to YOU so YOU can see if):*

When did you last eat?

EURYDICE

*( answering as she's supposed to):*

When you last told me. Before midnight.

GREEN MOVING FIGURE

*( marking something in a small notebook):*

The same with drinking?

EURYDICE

*( thinking):*

No. I mean I haven't had anything since midnight except for water. When I woke up this morning, without thinking, I took a sip of water.

*( Explains)*

I was thirsty.

GREEN MOVING FIGURE

When was this?

EURYDICE

I woke up about seven-thirty this morning. I . . .

*The GREEN MOVING FIGURE turns around and confers with other GREEN MOVING FIGURES.*

EURYDICE

Is something the matter?

GREEN MOVING FIGURE

It could be dangerous

EURYDICE

Because I drank water?

GREEN MOVING FIGURE

You'll be under full anesthesia. If you vomit during the operation, you might swallow your own vomit.

EURYDICE

Nobody told me that.

*The GREEN MOVING FIGURES confer among themselves about YOU's strangeness and her piercings. While they're chattering,*

EURYDICE

I'm cold.

GREEN MOVING FIGURE

Don't worry. You're not going to be cold for long.

9

Outside.

ORPHEUS

*( wandering around the grounds of the hospital):*

Can anyone tell me: Oh, where is Eurydice?

Diary written by Eurydice when she's dead

I'm in the middle of dirt.

Somewhere in this middle, a girl asks me for help. Without hesitating I give her the phone number of my oldest friend, who's still living in the USA, because I know that he never answers his phone.

Now I'm free to begin traveling with three or four other girls.

The countryside: Silver here is everywhere an object, and swamps. Pale greens and browns mix with branches; in this place objects and colors have the same status. Sky can be seen either through, or falling through, wood: inside the colors is a house.

Inside, two girls have just been murdered. I know this is true because when I look at them, they look like

store-window dummies. Therefore, the same could happen to me or to any of the girls who are with me.

The following's all that is known about this murderer: male. Otherwise, no redeeming features. Face not yet known — faceless-as-if-sheet-over-face. Kills by bleeding his victim from the feet: lines of blood can be seen on the dead body's very white skin. In the case of the girls, the cuts look as if they came from a single razor.

Water surrounds the house. As if it's on stilts. The bodies are thrown into the water.

The three or four girls whom I'm with — I think they're my friends — and I continue moving . . .

Knowing is as tenuous as a swamp . . .

I'm with a girlfriend in a real building. Composed of rooms within rooms, rectangular rooms, rooms cleanly plastered, windowless, a basement. No room is where it can be foreseen. Inside a small one, my friend is sitting on a throne that's a hairdresser's chair. Having just finished with the tresses of another friend, the haircutter has her fingers in the girl's dirty locks. I see what I've never before seen: though her hair had always looked long and curly, my friend is actually bald. Just by her putting fingers into these hairs, the cutter makes thousands of curls spring up all over the face. "I can't do much more," she says sadly, "because the last one took such long a time."

I guess we continued to travel farther, south, because now

we're in the house of which the first was an image. I *intuit*, that is I know, that the murderer's here. My girlfriend is tall, solid physique, straight brown hair in page-boy to shoulder. I watch the murderer kill her while she's lying beside me on a white-sheeted bed.

Now I know she was as good as dead before the murder began.

It is Christmas Day when all the world goes under the earth. I live here. I'm a bear. I'm in a hole. There's a window that looks outside.

I'm a seedling. It's winter and all the plants are stripped. Whatever of them is able to rise above the earth waves branches in the air.

I am starting from nothing. So slowly.

I can see that the sky is gray today. There's some clarity because the white wall of an empty building. Behind it, a derelict red brick building. Blue plastic on a dead-leaf-covered roof, over a red door, windows through which nothing can be seen. Two white roses rise out of the small squares of wet soil placed in the concrete.

I see ivy is crawling fungus-like over the nearest roof. There's no more difference between what I'm seeing and who I think I am.

Reality has been reduced.

Somebody said "nobody reads anymore." Nobody is anymore. Time is being reduced because plants must spring up. I can see them, roses, I once said "a rose is my cunt." I want to do more than just see.

in the courtroom of the dead

I'll do anything to get out of here. Death. I'm searching desperately for an airport.

I can see it in my mind. Light that's clear and nothing else. The yellow light is more transparent than white. The ground's the same color as space or sky. In such clear light, planes are free to sweep, to soar without

limit.

It rises into my mind, the top of my mind where consciousness lives, that each time I'm gone somewhere, that I've taken an airplane flight, I've forgotten something. The more flights, the more forgotten. I'm in a car which is moving swiftly toward the airport. I remember I forgot to pack my black sweater. In fact, I forgot to take any sweater. All I've got with me, even though I'm going away, is what I'm wearing. How the hell could I have done this? I say to whoever's driving the car, a taxi-driver or my lover, " *Oh. Oh, please can we go back to my house? Just for a second ...* [Pause] *Do I have time before the flight? ...* [Pause] *I think I should get some clothes to wear."*

"We'll return to the airport tomorrow morning," the man turns around, "because then there'll be plenty of time."

But I can't do anything in the mornings! I have to sleep through every morning! While the car I'm in moves opposite to the way it came, I ask this driver if I'm losing my mind.

It's known that Orpheus escaped from the underworld because, right before he appeared before Persephone in her own palace, he drank out of the spring on his right. "Memory." And so avoided what lay to his left, Lethe.

The man asks me a question. Have I ever experienced anything I can't remember?

"No."

"Then you're not losing your mind."

I feel safe.

It's night and the streets I'm seeing, the streets down which I'll be walking, look like those in London: narrow, filthy, and winding.

As I walk up one of them, I notice smoke coming from the bottom of a building ahead of me. The third time a building leaks or I see a leaking building, I remember: " *there's no smoke without fire.*" I don't know where I'm going, in hell.

The street that I'm on is about to end.

Right ahead of me, women in tailored business suits, cigarettes between fingers, drinks in hands, mill outside a NatWest building. This is where I'm going. As one of my feet scrapes against one of theirs, it just pops into my head that these women are here because they're waiting for me. *I have somewhere I can go* — that's a new thought for me. I never had anywhere to go before.

But I'm still shy so I remain at the edge of the crowd until a shortish woman wearing a brown suit introduces herself to me. She's going to take me into the to meet all the others so that I'll feel right at home. As we're passing through the front room where the business is done, she repeats that all of these women, bankers, are here so they can attend to my needs. I'm surprised because I only came here to take out of my account five hundred pounds as a loan; a loan is something like a withdrawal; I've done this tons of times in the past on my Visa card; there's never been any fuss; no special bank employee ever rushed forward to do anything for me. Awkwardly I spurt out, "All this for a loan?"

To myself, so that she can't overhear, whisper maybe something funny's going on in this bank ... Whisper more deeply: *maybe I'm funny to think that something funny's going on in this bank.*

We've reached the back of the room, the end of normal life; we're at the edge of a staircase ...

Though I'm only at the entrance of all that lies upstairs, I can see myself standing in the back of a courtroom. *The courtroom of the underworld* ... Its walls and ceiling are wood. A case is being heard: a girl is draped, arranged over a stool on the balcony to my right and everyone is staring at her. The case ends: she's allowed to get off her stool, to stand quietly, away from the public gaze, against the wall behind the balcony. It's time for my case to begin. I've no idea what I've done. I think I'm frightened: immersed in fright, which isn't yet mine, I protest to one of the bankers that I didn't do anything, and, if I did, I don't know what I did. She leads me down a narrow aisle between wooden pews, reminiscent of *Moby Dick*, to the front of this courtroom.

I'm standing behind a gigantic wood table.

"We just want you to identify this." I have no idea what the judge looks like.

I look down below me and see, on this table, a strange, small, battered, pill-shaped object. Given its uneven shape and the two minuscule metal bits sticking out of it, all I can think of is a used bullet. I've never seen a bullet before. A foot away, two similar objects a foot apart from each other.

"What's this!" Without identifying anything, I back away from this table, look up, and recognize an old-fashioned musket pointing at me. Whoever's behind the musket, *male* I think, shoots.

"What!" I don't like this reality at all. I wrap my arms around myself. I sink down to the ground. Like a child. Try to become part of the wall behind me.

To become invisible.

The judges had dragged me into the courtroom in order to identify three objects. Now that they've done with my services, they can no longer see me. Time passes. Then one of them notices that I've become insane and remarks to the rest, "We've got to do something about..."

It was in this manner that I escaped being judged.

I sleep through the day, wake only for the night. Night, when the roses here are red. Night, the room into which I can enter, the one where I can read. From Tsvetaeva: *It begins like a chapter in that novel Jane Eyre. The secret of the red room*. There are no secrets down here. There's only red. Red's alive. It's everywhere tonight: it runs down the lines of the leaves which I know are green, a faint streak in that dead river I cannot see. In the lowest part of the sky.

Red's the color of nerves when there is green.

Tsvetaeva: *The first thing I learned about Pushkin is that they wanted to kill him. Then I learned that Pushkin is — A POET. D'Anthes called Pushkin out to a duel. Lured him into the snow, and there, in the snow where all things happened, shot him with a pistol in his stomach*.

A yucky story, Tsvetaeva's. She was forever wild — cropped hair, boy's look, blew smoke in parents' face, fucked around, not yet seventeen, It was Russia, pre-revolution. Liberal, intellectual parents, not the class to come from during the workers' revolution. And she, just a child, said "Fuck you" to all those classes. She said all that she cared about was love. But what she really wanted, according to Nadezhda Mandelstam, was to go as far out as possible. In Tsvetaeva's own words, "to experience every emotion to the limit" so she could go beyond every limit.

When young, fell in love with Sergei Efron, who also wanted to be a poet. Vowed, that moment, that they should never part. When he made her pregnant a year later, married. Osip Mandelstam, madly in love with her, followed her from Moscow to Vladimir. Then, the February Revolution began; Irina, her and Sergei's daughter, was born. Efron joined the Whites as an officer, left her and she wrote to him: "If God leaves you

among the living, I will serve you like a dog."

There was no food in Moscow for the poor. Terrified that Irina was going to die, Tsvetaeva gave her up to an orphanage. Two months later the former perished from malnutrition.

*All of this prepared a child very thoroughly for the frightening era preordained for it:*

Efron returned home. She followed him to Prague. Then, to Paris. They were poor. It was the early thirties; Efron began to work for the Soviet secret police. She didn't know this. He helped them survey, then murder Tolstoy's son. Aided in the murder of Ignaty Reis, a secret police defector. Disappeared into Spain, reappeared in Russia.

"Sergei Efron and I are eighteen and seventeen years old. I resolve that no matter what I will never part from him, and I will marry him." In Russia, the Soviet police arrested, then murdered Efron because he knew too much. Tsvetaeva, now one of the best-known poets in the world, appealed to the head of the Union of Soviet Writers. He informed her that there was no room for her here. Later he shot himself. Had already sent her to Golitsyno where her money dwindled away. Mur, her son, begged her for food. There were only two loaves of bread. She climbed on a chair and hung herself.

I know that there are girls down here. Who also live under the earth. Who put dirt into each other's mouths and take the same out with their lips.

Tsvetaeva said that all she could be was a poet. That there were only poets and then a dark mass, people, the ones who had murdered Pushkin.

This is the beginning of the red room. If there are to be poets now, they can no longer be romantics. Poetry is only a physical phenomenon.

in the shcool of the dead

As my eye moved into the top floor of a house, it perceived that it was inside a school dorm. An immense room whose floor was wood. Narrow cots in rows covered the rough wood.

The usual *Jane Eyre* shit. Light fell clearly into the room. Across a well-kept lawn, a similar, smaller building. The only beginning that existed was a place.

Since my lover had betrayed me, the school room I was in had a plaque over its door which read "The lover's betrayal." Why had he fucked me over? Sue, my best friend, who lived on the other side of the lawn, would never do anything to hurt me and even she was siding with my lover. I had no idea what I could have done. It must have been horrible.

Now I began to remember: I slept until noon; I was selfish; I took too much. Also it was true that I was very demanding.

So I found myself on the other side of the wall. In a kitchen. Large, well equipped as if alive. There I murdered someone. I knew that murder is just about the most heinous act one can do and at the same time I knew that what I had done wasn't. It was something I did. Nonetheless I would have to escape from the authorities who are just about to come into the kitchen ... I had to get away from this place sooner than possible ...

... I did. Out toward the sea. Where there was a lonely complex of buildings. All the land beyond the wall out there was so flat that everything could be seen everywhere.



A girl's voice told me it was OK to enter. I crossed the threshold. Into the building that served as the front to all that went on behind it, to those buildings who held mysteries.

In this front building, as if reality was emotional, I perceived solely by feeling.

There must have been three of us, for I saw two children though I knew they weren't children. My guide, who was the third member of our trio — then who was I? at that time I forgot to ask this question — showed me to the door to the house inside of which I'd be safe.

Safe inside a house within a house.

What was there was hidden, but not to me. Through passage-ways that were unable to be remembered — though the narrowness was — up stairs that couldn't exist. To where I'd be safe.

I know I couldn't be caught up there, for if you saw this building from the outside, you'd note that its roof turned down like a hat. The windows just below the roof saw nothing. If you were still looking from the outside, you wouldn't see into anything, because the three or four openings located in this structure that rose above all the others were black, opaque.

This was what *to perceive by feeling* meant.

I was dreaming myself, and maybe something else, maybe me, something at the moment I didn't know, because I hadn't named.

Later, as if there was time, I watched boys who were in their early twenties walk with no problem over that threshold. I wasn't scared: I knew they weren't here because they were going to punish me for murder. Rather they were part of the theater world. The house, actually, was theirs because its history lay wrapped in the mysteries of the past of performance and of theater.

Since they were part of a traveling performance group, all of them were slim.

At the very top of the house, I swung off of a banister that ran along the edge of the floor above the stairs that didn't exist. A thin, dark guy who was on the other side of the banister was chatting to me. The sort of sexual desire that when it moves begins the world started up in me. This hadn't happened to me in years. The same thing must have been taking place in him because we drew closer to each other even though lots of people were watching us. All that took place did so up against my eyes so that each thing was huge. Monstrous. Right over that black iron railing, the guy and I began to fuck.

We are gods.

The curtain of the red room draws back, draw it back, and there are trees, small, oddly shaped in that they bend rather than reach up toward the sky, down to the ground, where there's a rose above the earth.

Orpheus

Others say that this was what happened to Orpheus:

According to Plato, he had never loved Eurydice: "... the Gods sent Orpheus away from Hades empty-handed and showed him a mere ghost ... because he lacked spirit, as is only natural in a musician, because he hadn't the courage to die for love, but rather chose to scheme his way living, into Hades." In other words, he wanted to love without having to die. For this the gods punished him by getting women to murder him.

Maurice Blanchot says that Eurydice is the extreme to which art, Orpheus's art, can attain. What Orpheus

wanted wasn't Eurydice, but that moment when he disobeyed the gods, all that he had been told, when he turned around and looked at Eurydice full in the face. Not that he had wanted to see her. He looked into her face because he didn't, because he wanted her body closed to him, her face sealed shut by death. When he turned around to grasp Eurydice, he saw only his own inability, that which cannot be seen. He saw himself. (Actually Orpheus has never seen Eurydice, for he doesn't want her to be.) For Blanchot, art comes out of such a moment. Everything must be sacrificed to that moment: seeing that which is hidden. Otherwise people don't exist.

How can writing matter?

According to mythic tradition, after Orpheus abandoned Eurydice, he climbed out of the underworld. Sick to death of death or so alive that he was inebriated. Perhaps due to what he had just been through, he became even more famous. People looked up to him; women and girls tried to do anything to sleep with him. That had been the only thing he had wanted when he had first begun to date Eurydice. But he was no longer interested in women. He had a few boys.

The myth tells us that after Orpheus climbs out of the realm of death, and then after he turns from Dionysius to Apollo, women kill him. His head floats down the river Hebrus until it reaches a cave in Antissa, sacred to the god he had forsaken. Where the head begins to sing:

letter found from Orpheus after his death

E—

I love you and at the same time I was unhappy at every moment when I was with you. I could never, and I still don't, even though I'm dead, understand how these two emotions, opposing each other, could both be in me. I know that if I tried telling you what was upsetting me, you would only have turned to everything you did wrong — having had cancer, in following me finding yourself, no money, in a strange land — but, baby, you did nothing wrong. It's me. What I mean is this. I've decided you're not the girl I want. It's not cause of your strength, of which we both know you have plenty. In high school I always longed after the bodies of boys, but I wanted a girl. I thought I was getting a boy in a girl's body. But no, you loved me too much. That I can't handle. What I really want scares me the most.

I stayed up night after night only because I loved you and so I lost work time. Because I cared for you, I not only forgot my own best interests, but also allowed you to trample on my dick by not letting me make you happy. But now that I've returned to my senses, I won't fall in love again. I feel anger toward you. Anger, whose source is lying in you because I usually don't become angry at people.

E's reply

You said you'd always be there for me and so I should come back to your land so you could take care of me and nurse me back to health cause there all of your friends, who are your true family, would help. I'd be safe with you there. I needed you cause I had cancer.

The fuck with rules. Rules had placed me in a deathhouse. Until now I've held everything in. It's really hard for me to say this.

I'll try to say it again: I traveled to your land though I was scared that trip would kill me; then I was so exhausted that if I walked just eight blocks, I remember now, I'd have to sit down for at least a half an hour on whatever bench I could find; I didn't know quite where I was; legally I was alien; there was no work; you are still, as you had been before I had come to you, all "Go! Girl! Go! I'll do anything for you!" but each time I had to find a place to live, work, discovered another hard lymph node under my arm, you ran the other way.

It was only when we were in that bed, high above the world — then I thought the birds could have been circling around our bodies circled around each other — that we made our world totally separate from everything else. It was the only way we could be together.

I loved being there.

But as my health grew stronger, as I needed to return to work, a split appeared between us. You had the work, though you complained you didn't, so I was a nobody, a rat, a dowdy housewife. You must have wanted me to remain in that separate world because you had no interest in my work. But to afford to stay there, I had to make money in the real world. I was in an untenable position: in the outside world I was *no one*; there you were someone; you weren't going to share your position with me; in fact, you wanted me out of your house.

I'm trying to say something.

And finally you left me cold: You said, "I'm not in this world in order to take care of you; I don't remember that you cared, and care, for me; from now on, your existence is no longer my concern."

( *This is just one of the poems that dead girls can write to each other in memory of the life above.* )

After he's returned to the realm of the living,  
Orpheus says this:

All that worry about U-turn dying made me physically sick. In other words, being in hell stunk. I got sicker cause I loved her so much. Though I don't look it because I used to be fat, I'm extremely sensitive . Actually I'm a woman. U-turn never understood this.

She never understood anything about me plus she wanted too much from me. I'm not the person she wanted me to be. She wanted me to protect her. as if I'm strong.

I hated being down there. I'm just telling you everything I feel. I get high and drink, that's just what I do, and you can't do that when you're dead. I hated being down there, in all that muck: I have no interest in having anything to do with death anymore.

I had thought, after U-turn and I were together a week or two, that she was the sexiest, the hottest piece of flesh I had ever encountered, even when we found out she had cancer; I had thought, no one has ever turned me on so much even if she is willing to be mine; I had thought that since she was wealthy and famous, she was going to turn my life, which back then looked like an abyss, into paradise; I had thought we would always be drunk, in the limelight; I had thought that she was my beginning. I had wanted to believe all this so much that I couldn't see what was in front of my eyes. Until I turned around and looked at U' Down in that hole.

I saw and told her that I didn't want what I saw.

I've returned back here. I'm glad that I met U because now I know I can love again.